

FI/RI-56/246  
14 February 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Policy Staff, Office of Security  
VIA: Chief, FI  
SUBJECT: Comments on ICIS Letter dated 26 January 1956

1. The Records Integration Division has complied with Executive Order 10501 to the extent possible considering the type of classified material produced and retained within the Clandestine Services.
2. The vast majority of material in this area is in the nature of intelligence reports, operational communications, planning documents and administrative type correspondence in support of operational programs. In most cases, these documents are classified Secret or above due to their sensitivity.
3. However, during the past year efforts have been made to decrease the number of documents classified Top Secret and to pursue a vigorous program of downgrading Top Secret. The Top Secret Control Office reported 10,001 new Top Secret accessions during 1955, all of which were not internally produced. Complementary to this, 15,437 Top Secret documents were downgraded to Secret or below during the same period. Implementations such as "automatic downgrading" stamps on covering memoranda have been used widely in permissive instances; efforts have been successful in maintaining the classification of purely administrative correspondence to Confidential or Internal Use Only and RI cooperates in the Agency-wide downgrading program by complying with the "change in classification" bulletins issued by the Agency Classification Officer.
4. No internal audit of all classified material for possible downgrading has been made, with the exception, of course, of the Top Secret program mentioned above, since it is believed that this would not be a fruitful endeavor due to the nature and content of the documents concerned.
5. The only obstacle that has been encountered in declassifying or downgrading material is obtaining the authorization of the originator or higher authority. This is due mainly to the changing personnel situation in this part of the Agency or to the lack of detailed knowledge concerning the older papers.

6. To achieve effective declassification of previously classified material would require the review of several million documents presently retained in the Clandestine Services and new accessions of over 500,000 documents per year by competent personnel.

7. It would seem more logical and effective to declassify or produce sanitized or sterilized copies of classified material as the use for it was evidenced to be in the public interest. This has been done quite satisfactorily in several recent instances.

8. Neither of the two suggested procedures appear advisable for use in the Clandestine Services since, in essence, they would depreciate the overall classification system by interposing a time element into the security system. Section 7 of Public Law 110 appears to be an all inclusive justification for the SECRET classification for the majority of documents used in the Clandestine Services.



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✓ Chief, RI

Attachment:

Letter from Chairman, ICIS dated  
26 January 1956

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ORIGINAL DOCUMENT MISSING PAGE(S):

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STATINTL

TRANSMITTAL SLIP		DATE 21 Feb 56
TO: [REDACTED]		
ROOM NO. 1334	BUILDING M	
REMARKS:  Per our telephone conversation, there is attached for your information a copy of [REDACTED] memo of 14 Feb 56. I would appreciate if if your comments on the ICIS letter of 26 Jan 56 could be forwarded to the undersigned as promptly as possible.		
FROM: Chief, Policy Staff/OS		
ROOM NO. A 222	BUILDING [REDACTED]	EXTENSION 692
FORM NO. 1 FEB 55	241	REP WH [REDACTED] (47)

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